

MEAGHAN MORRIS

History in Australian Popular Culture 1972-1995

VOLUME 1

HISTORY
IN AUSTRALIAN POPULAR CULTURE
1972-1995

by

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CERTIFICATE

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature of Candidate

Meagher Morris

For
KEITH MORRIS
1920-1982

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In the first two chapters of the thesis, I revise essays written before my doctoral enrolment but necessary to my argument here; they were first published as "At Henry Parkes Motel", Cultural Studies 2/1 (1988), 1-47, and "Things To Do With Shopping Centres", Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism ed. Susan Sheridan (London: Verso, 1988), 193-225. First versions of other chapters have been published as "'On The

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"Great Moments in Social Climbing: King Kong and The Human Fly", Sexuality and Space ed. Beatriz Colomina (Princeton: Princeton University School of Architecture, 1992), 1-51;

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"Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower", New Formations 11 (1990), 5-18, and "Life as A Tourist Object in Australia",

International Tourism: Identity and Change ed. Marie-Françoise Lanfant, John B. Allcock and Edward M. Bruner (London: Sage, 1995), 177-191. The greater part of the Introduction, and Chapter Six ('Lunching for the Republic'), are unpublished.

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ABSTRACT

As cultural studies has consolidated its claim to constitute a distinct field of study in recent years, debate has intensified about its characteristic objects, concepts and methods, if any, and, therefore, its relationship to traditional disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

In History in Australian Popular Culture 1972-1995, I focus on an intersection of cultural studies with history. However, I do not debate the competing claims of "history" and "cultural studies" as academic projects. Rather, I examine the role played by historical discourse in popular cultural practices, and how those practices contest and modify public debate about history; I take "historical discourse" to include argument about as well as representation of the past, and so to involve a rhetorical dimension of desire and suasive force that varies according to social contexts of usage. Therefore, in this thesis I do cultural studies empirically by asking what people say and do in the name of history in everyday contexts of work and leisure, and what is at stake in public as well as academic "theoretical" discussion of the meaning and value of history for Australians today.

Taking tourism and television ("public culture") as my major research fields, I argue that far from abolishing historical consciousness -- as the "mass" dimension of popular culture is so often said to do -- these distinct but globally

interlocking cultural industries have emerged in Australian conditions as major sites of historical contestation and pedagogy.

Tourism and television are, of course, trans-national industries which impact on the living-space (and time) of local communities and blur the national boundaries so often taken to define the coherence of both "history" and "culture" in the modern period. I argue, however, that the historical import of these industries includes the use of the social and cultural spaces they make available by people seeking to publicise their own arguments with the past, their criticisms of the present, and their projects for the future; this usage is what I call "popular culture", and it can include properly historical criticism of the power of tourism and television to disrupt or destroy a particular community's sense of its past.

From this it follows that in this thesis I defend cultural studies as a practice which, far from participating in a "death" or "killing" of history, is capable of accounting in specific ways for the liveliness of historical debate in Australia today.